



615 Chestnut Street

Suite 1250
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-4476
(215) 861-8200

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12 MEMBERS OF VIOLENT LATIN KINGS DRUG ORGANIZATION
CHARGED WITH MURDER IN AID OF RACKETEERING

Separate indictments charge 23 more with drug and gun offenses

BETHLEHEM - A superseding indictment¹ was unsealed today charging 12 alleged members of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation ("ALKQN," or "Latin Kings"), Bethlehem Sun Tribe, with participating in a racketeering conspiracy that includes murder in aid of racketeering and other crimes, announced United States Attorney Zane David Memeger. According to the superseding indictment, the Bethlehem Sun Tribe used violence and intimidation as a means to maintain its territory, power, and profits. Its own members were subjected to murder, kidnaping, and assault as punishment for violating any of the tribes rules. Indictments were also filed against 23 gang members and associates charging drug and firearms offenses.

Joining in today's announcement were FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Janice Fedarcy of the Philadelphia Field Office, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Mark Potter, Special Agent-in-Charge Joseph Clarke with the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, Northampton County District Attorney John Morganelli, Lehigh County District Attorney James Martin, and Bethlehem Police Commissioner Stuart Bedics.

The superseding indictment alleges that on January 10, 2004, at Saucon Park in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, defendants Neftali Colon and Oscar Hernandez shot and killed Eugene Martinez, an individual who had assaulted and disrespected defendant Neftali Colon and another member of the Bethlehem Sun Tribe.

"The type of brutality and lawlessness alleged in this indictment is exactly what the 222 Anti-Gang Initiative aims to eradicate," said Memeger. "We will use every tool available to fight organizations that bring their criminal enterprises to the communities we serve."

The 12 defendants charged in the RICO conspiracy superseding indictment are: Luis Colon, a/k/a "King Respect," Neftali Colon, a/k/a "King Nefti," Oscar Hernandez, a/k/a "King Flip," Pedro Velasquez, a/k/a "King P-Solo," Michael Pagan, a/k/a "King Vision," Abran Figueroa, a/k/a "King

¹An Indictment or Information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Ace,” Jesse Zayas, a/k/a “King Pride,” Waldemar Torres, a/k/a “King Vail,” Steve Calderon, a/k/a “King Silence,” Cesar Velez, a/k/a “King C’s,” Hector Luis Rivera, a/k/a “King Tito,” and Carlos R. Martinez, a/k/a “King Knowledge.” The charges include conspiracy to participate in a racketeering enterprise (RICO conspiracy), murder in aid of racketeering activity, conspiracy to commit murder in aid of racketeering activity, conspiracy to commit kidnapping and assault in aid of racketeering activity, kidnapping and assault in aid of racketeering activity, using and carrying a firearm during a crime of violence, distribution of controlled substances, convicted felons in possession of firearms, sales of firearms to known felons and criminal forfeiture of 14 firearms and ammunition.

Some of the incidents alleged in the superseding indictment include:

-On March 17, 2004, in Vineland, New Jersey, defendants Luis Colon, Neftali Colon, Oscar Hernandez, Pedro Velasquez, Hector Luis Rivera, and Carlos R. Martinez, traveled to Vineland, New Jersey upon orders of the Philadelphia chapter of the Latin Kings, armed with firearms, body armor and ammunition, to serve as “soldiers” to assist in the murder of members of the New Jersey Latin Kings. The plan was unsuccessful.

-On January 23, 2008, defendants Abran Figueroa, Jesse Zayas, and Waldemar Torres, conspired and agreed to kidnap and assault an individual they believed had cooperated with law enforcement. The next day they kidnaped the individual and assaulted him.

-On January 27, 2008, defendants Luis Colon, Michael Pagan, Abran Figueroa, Jesse Zayas, and Waldemar Torres discussed the possible murder of someone they believed had cooperated with law enforcement in the Saucon Park murder investigation. On January 28, 2008, defendant Jesse Zayas arranged to obtain a firearm to use in the planned murder.

-In October 2008, defendants Pedro Velasquez, Michael Pagan, Waldemar Torres, and Steve Calderon conspired and agreed to murder an individual who they believed to be cooperating with law enforcement in the investigation of the Saucon Park murder. This plan was unsuccessful.

Between November 22, 2007 and February 2, 2010, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, defendants Luis Colon, Pedro Velasquez, Cesar Velez, and Steve Calderon, are also alleged to have distributed crack cocaine and methamphetamine

Between December 3, 2007 and February 2, 2010, defendants Velez and Figueroa allegedly sold numerous firearms to members of the Latin Kings, Bethlehem Sun Tribe.

“This on-going gang investigation, and the indictments and arrests announced today, highlight the importance of our vigilance against the continuing wave of criminal thugs who seek to profit through crime and violence,” said FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Janice K. Fedarczyk.

If convicted of all charges, each of the 12 defendants faces a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Additional Drug and Gun Indictments

Along with the main indictment, 18 separate indictments were filed charging 23 people, who were members or associates of the Bethlehem Sun Tribe (see attached chart). The charges allege that the defendants sold guns, drugs, or both, in Bethlehem, between November 2007 and June 2008. The gun charges include: possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, selling firearms to known felons, possession of firearms with obliterated serial numbers, possession of a machine gun, and possession of an unregistered short-barreled rifle. The drug charges include: conspiracy to distribute, distribution of 50 grams or more of cocaine base, possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine, distribution of heroin, and distribution of a controlled substance within 1,000 feet of a public housing facility.

If convicted of all charges, as set forth in the attached chart, each defendant faces up to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment or 10 years for certain firearms violations and up to life imprisonment for certain narcotics convictions.

This case is part of the “222 Corridor Anti-Gang Initiative,” a federally funded program designed to defeat some of the most violent and pervasive gangs in the country. The “222 Corridor” includes the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Reading, Lancaster, York, and Harrisburg. This initiative combines federal, state, and local law enforcement resources to attack gang crime and violence throughout the corridor.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, and the Bethlehem Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys John M. Gallagher and Seth Weber.

**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA
Suite 1250, 615 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106**

**Contact: PATTY HARTMAN
Media Contact
215-861-8525**

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